UMMUL MOMINEEN

SAUDA

BINT ZAMA'AH

سودة بِنت زمعة رضئ الله تعالى عنها

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UMMUL MOMINEEN SAUDA BINT ZAMA'AH

(رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)

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بِسم الله الرحمنِ الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام
على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

UMMUL MOMINEEN SAUDA BINT ZAM'AH (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)

Ummul Momineen Sauda bint Zam'ah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) belonged to Amir ibn Lu'ayy clan of the Quraish. While the exact date of her birth is not recorded in surviving sources, biographers place her as a mature woman at the time of her marriage to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), suggesting a birth perhaps two decades before the advent of Islam, roughly in the late sixth century CE. She was known to be of noble descent, born into a household that had a status among the Quraish, but not luxury. What she lacked in worldly glitz, she embodied in resilience, wisdom, and faith.

FAMILY AND UPBRINGING

Her father, Zam'ah ibn Qays, belonged to Quraish tribe. Her mother's identity is not definitively recorded in early sources. The pre-Islamic environment of Makkah was steeped in polytheism, but Sauda's (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) early upbringing likely included exposure to the socio-cultural challenges of a male dominated society where the birth of a daughter was seldom celebrated. Yet, her life would subvert these norms in extraordinary ways.

Like many Quraishi women of her time, she was married at a young age. Her first husband was As-Sakran ibn Amr, a man of sound character and gentle disposition, and—most significantly—among the earliest converts to Islam.

ACCEPTANCE OF ISLAM

When Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) started calling his close companions and family members to Islam, Sauda and her husband were among the first batch of believers. Their Islam was not passive; it was a conscious stand against the established idol-worship and injustices of the Quraishi elite. Historian Ibn Sa'd, in his *Tabaqat al-Kubra*, notes that she accepted Islam before the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) migration to Madinah, firmly standing with the few who bore the brunt of early persecution.

MIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA

The Makkan period of Islam was one of intense oppression. The Quraish were ruthless in their persecution of the weak and poor among the new Muslims. To escape this, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) instructed a group of believers to migrate to Abyssinia (Habasha), where a just Christian king, al-Najashi (the Negus), ruled. Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) and her husband were part of this first Hijrah, sacrificing home and comfort for the preservation of their faith.

In Abyssinia, they found temporary peace, but the trials were not over. According to reports preserved in *Ibn Ishaq's Sirah* and later cited by *Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani* in *al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah*, As-Sakran ibn Amr (رضئ الله تعالى عنه) passed away either during the return journey to Makkah or shortly thereafter. This left Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) widowed and without protection, an extremely vulnerable position for a woman in that society.

Yet, her courage never wavered. Having returned to Makkah, now a widow and a believer in an increasingly hostile environment, her life stood at a critical juncture. It is in this moment of personal loss and unwavering conviction that the seeds were sown for the next, extraordinary phase of her life: becoming the wife of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

LIFE BEFORE MARRIAGE TO THE PROPHET (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

Following the death of her husband, As-Sakran ibn Amr, the life of Sauda bint Zam'ah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) entered a phase marked by both deep personal loss and resolute spiritual strength. Widowed, older in age, and already bearing the social weight of being a believing woman in a hostile Makkan society, her circumstances reflected the loneliness and persecution endured by many early Muslims. Yet, in the face of these realities, her character emerged all the more

luminous: steadfast in her Islam, humble in her demeanor, and unshaken in her loyalty to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) and the truth he brought.

Sources such as Ibn Sa‘d and Ibn Hajar agree that Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) returned to Makkah either shortly before or shortly after the passing of her husband. The exact cause of his death is not detailed, but the emotional burden it left upon her is unquestionable. According to Ibn Ishaq's Seerah, many of the returning Muslims from Abyssinia did so in hope of reconciliation with their own clans or because of false rumors that the Quraish had softened in their stance against Islam. But those hopes were soon crushed; persecution resumed, more vicious than before.

For a woman in seventh-century Arabia, widowhood—especially in a tribal society without male protectors—was both a social and economic vulnerability. Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), now alone, had no father or husband to shield her. Her son, Abdur Rahman ibn Sakran, was still very young. Her own family, including her brother (Zam‘ah ibn Qays), remained non-Muslim at this time and offered no supportive protection. The society around her treated Muslims with growing suspicion and hostility. But despite the mounting threats, she did not renounce her faith.

Her days were likely spent in discreet circles of believers, worshipping in secret, receiving instruction from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) when possible, and enduring hunger, ridicule, and social ostracization—what early historians describe as the norm for the vulnerable believers of Makkah.

In the tenth year of prophethood—Aam al-Huzn (The Year of Grief)—the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) suffered the devastating loss of his beloved wife, Ummul Momineen Khadijah bint Khuwaylid (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) and uncle Hadhrat Abu Talib (رضئ الله تعالى عنه). Their deaths left the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) heartbroken and also burdened with the practical responsibility of caring for his daughters—especially the young Fatimah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)—and managing the affairs of his expanding Ummah.

It was during this period that Khawlah bint Hakim (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)—a female companion concerned for both the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) well-being and Sauda's condition—approached the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) with a proposal that was both socially and spiritually wise. She said, as reported in Ibn Sa‘d's Tabaqat: "O Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), will you not marry? For you are now alone and you have children. Shall I suggest someone to you—Sauda bint Zam‘ah, a woman of strong faith, who stood firm with you in Abyssinia?"

Thus, this marriage was an act of divine wisdom, fulfilling multiple purposes like (i) Providing companionship to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) in his grief, (ii) Offering a stable home for his daughters, (iii) Honoring a woman who had shown great courage in faith, and (iv) protecting a vulnerable widow of the Ummah.

Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), when approached with the proposal, reportedly accepted with humility and gratitude. According to Ibn Hajar, she expressed her awareness of her older age and lack of outward beauty but was deeply honored to be chosen by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). The marriage contract was conducted by her guardian, her non-Muslim brother Zam‘ah, who, despite being a disbeliever at the time, gave consent according to tribal custom. This, too, highlights the

balance the early Muslims maintained between upholding Islamic values and navigating tribal realities.

MARRIAGE TO THE PROPHET (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

The marriage of Sauda bint Zam‘ah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) was not just a personal union but also a manifestation of profound wisdom, mercy, and social restoration at a critical juncture in Islamic history. Taking place during one of the most emotionally turbulent periods of the Prophet's ((صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) life—the Year of Grief (Am al-Ḥuzn)—this marriage fulfilled multiple spiritual, social, and practical objectives, becoming a turning point for both Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) and the household of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

THE CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME OF MARRIAGE

As has been described above, after the death of Ummul Momineen Khadijah bint Khuwaylid (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)—the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) first wife for 25 years—the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) was left not only grief-stricken but also with the burden of managing his family and mission without a partner at his side. His daughters, including the young Sayyida Fatimah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), required motherly care and presence, and the demands of prophethood were intensifying with increasing persecution of Muslims in Makkah.

It was during this period that Khawlah bint Hakim (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), the widow of Uthman ibn Maẓun, approached the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) suggested: ‘O Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), shall I not find you a wife?"

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) asked, "Who?"

She replied, "If you desire a virgin, then Aishah bint Abi Bakr (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), and if you prefer a previously married woman, then Sauda bint Zamʿah." (*Reported by Ibn Saʿd in Tabaqāt*).

This moment marked the divine orchestration of a deeply meaningful marriage. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) approved of the proposal for Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), recognizing her sincerity, her endurance for the sake of Islam, and her cheerful, mature disposition.

According to Ibn Sa‘d and al-Tabari, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) sent word to Zam'ah ibn Qays, Sauda's brother, seeking permission in accordance with the prevailing tribal customs. Despite not being a Muslim himself, Zam'ah agreed to the marriage, reflecting the high regard the

Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) still held among certain members of the Quraish for his honesty and social grace.

The marriage contract (Nikaḥ) was finalized in Makkah around 10 years before the Hijrah, approximately 620 CE, only a few weeks or months after the death of Ummul Momineen Khadijah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا). The mahr (bridal gift) was set at 400 dirhams, a modest but honorable amount, and it was the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) himself who officiated the contract through a mutual understanding and acceptance.

There was no formal wedding feast recorded at the time, as the Muslims were under severe pressure and persecution. What stood out was the ethical and spiritual framework of the marriage: compassion, duty and support.

The marriage was a model for Muslims to understand that companionship, sincerity, and faith matter more than societal standards. Her presence in the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) home brought stability, maternal warmth, and cheerful support. She became a stepmother to his daughters and a respected member of the small but growing household of prophecy.

LIFE AFTER MARRIAGE

The marriage of Sauda bint Zamʿah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) to the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) marked a new chapter in her life—one defined by quiet dignity, unwavering faith, and cheerful service within the sacred household of prophethood. As the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) continued to bear the burden of persecution in Makkah, Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) offered him not only domestic stability but also emotional companionship during a time of profound sorrow following the death of Ummul Momineen Khadijah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا). In doing so, she became an integral part of the unfolding story of Islam's earliest community.

By the time she entered the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) household, Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was older than many of his later wives and brought with her a sense of maturity and calm. She was known for her warm and jovial temperament, often described by the early biographers as possessing a delightful sense of humor which was paired with an evident piety and reverence for the seriousness of her role. Despite the harsh conditions in Makkah, and later in Madinah, she remained content with a simple and austere life, showing no desire for worldly comfort.

Her role within the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) home was characterized by modesty and maternal care. She helped raise the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) daughters, including the youngest, Fatimah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), and contributed to the smooth running of the household. Although she did not bear any children from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) herself, her presence was a source of moral support and harmony within the family.

When the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) eventually married other women, including Ummul Momineen Aisha (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) displayed a remarkable degree of humility and selflessness. Realizing that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) had a large family and many responsibilities, she once voluntarily offered to give up her assigned nights to Ummul Momineen Aisha (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) in order to remain as one of his wives in name and in the Hereafter. This noble gesture, recorded in authentic narrations such as those in Sahih Muslim, reflected her sincere desire for closeness to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) not for personal gain, but out of love for his mission and a longing for eternal companionship with him in Paradise. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) accepted her offer, and her status as one of the Mothers of the Believers was preserved without compromise.

In Madinah, she participated fully in the social and spiritual life of the community. She performed obligatory acts of worship, attended communal prayers when appropriate, and maintained her devotion to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) with steadfast loyalty.

Sauda (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) remained with the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) until his passing. During his final illness, she stayed close, but—true to her temperament—did not seek prominence. Her presence in those final days was marked by quiet support. After his death, she chose to live in continued simplicity, dedicating herself to worship, charity, and remembrance of Allah. She did not engage in public debates or political affairs, nor did she issue formal legal rulings. Instead, she embodied another model of service—quiet, sincere, and motherly.

Her piety and generosity remained well known in the community. She lived through the early caliphates and was said to have passed away during the rule of Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (رضي الله تعالى عنه), most likely around 22 AH (644 CE). She was laid to rest in the blessed cemetery of Jannat al-Baqi, joining several of the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) family members and companions.